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SUBJECT: NORTH KIVU UPDATE (9/10/07 17:00 GMT): FIGHTING
DIMINISHING, BUT TENSIONS REMAIN

REF: KINSHASA 1072

¶1. (SBU) Fighting has diminished in North Kivu since pro-government forces and troops loyal to dissident General Laurent Nkunda stopped shooting in and around Sake, 20 miles west of the provincial capital Goma, on September 6. There have been isolated incidents in Rutshuru territory and in northern parts of Masisi territory over the past few days, but the apparent pause in fighting around Sake appears to be holding. MONUC and Congolese military (FARDC) sources told us elements of the mixed Bravo Brigade fired on one another September 7 outside the village of Nkokwe about 30 miles northeast of Goma. MONUC military officials said skirmishes took place west of Kitchanga, about 30 miles north of Goma, September 7 between Nkunda loyalists of Delta Brigade and suspected Mayi-Mayi and FDLR fighters. The incidents have not sparked any wider conflict.

¶2. (SBU) MONUC authorities had earlier claimed its peacekeepers had brokered a "ceasefire" in Sake between the two sides. MONUC military spokesman Major Gabriel deBrosses later backed away from such language, saying in press reports that there is no official, written ceasefire in place. Other MONUC officials said the firing stopped only after peacekeepers arrived and secured positions in Sake, separating the two sides. DeBrosses and other MONUC personnel told us they believe the current lull is allowing the FARDC and Nkunda's forces to regroup and solidify their positions in Sake and elsewhere. MONUC peacekeepers remain deployed in Sake and are continuing their patrols to defend Goma and other populated areas.

¶3. (U) With the lull in fighting, two top FARDC commanders spent September 8 in North Kivu to evaluate the situation. FARDC Chief of Defense Forces General Dieudonne Kayembe and Land Forces Commander General Gabriel Amisi, along with MONUC North Kivu Brigade Commander General Bikram Singh, toured Sake and other recent battlefield locations by air. Kayembe said he would make a full report to President Kabila upon his return to Kinshasa. Singh and other MONUC officials reiterated previous calls for dissidents to leave positions that threatened urban areas and report for integration.

¶4. (SBU) The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) chief John Holmes, finishing a five-day visit to the DRC, said in Goma September 7 he found the internally displaced persons (IDP) situation in the province "intolerable." Holmes said the UN would work closely with the GDRC and neighboring governments to find a peaceful solution to the current violence. He allowed that security was such that it impeded immediate access for humanitarian agency to IDP populations. New figures from OCHA and UNHCR estimate

there are nearly 300,000 IDPs in the southern part of North Kivu, although officials admit these numbers are only estimates.

15. (U) In a September 4 communique, Nkunda attacked Kabila as the chief instigator of the recent violence in North Kivu, claiming the president has failed to live up to the December 2006 Kigali agreements that led to the "mixage" process. He criticized Kabila for the FARDC's failure to provide sufficient troops for a sixth mixed brigade or to allow those units to begin operations against the FDLR. He further argued that Kabila has failed to address claims in Nkunda's "cahier des charges," thus embarrassing Kabila himself and Rwanda, which helped broker the original "mixage" deal. Nkunda alleged his political wing, the National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP), does not wish to overthrow the government or seize power by force. He said the CNDP and its members are convinced the current crisis can only be resolved through negotiation.

16. (U) The staunchly pro-Kabila daily "L'Avenir" criticized MONUC in its September 8 and 10 editions for "saving" Nkunda by its intervention in Sake, adding that the Department's call for negotiations appears to put Nkunda and his troops on an equal footing with the FARDC. The September 10 edition asserted that the international community tends to take MONUC's position and denounced the Department's press release for appearing to indiscriminately blame violence on both the government and insurgents. The article noted that while the Department lauded the recent meetings between the GDRC and Rwandan officials, it failed to acknowledge links between Rwandan authorities and the conflict in North Kivu. The paper concluded that helping the DRC and Rwanda live in peace

KINSHASA 00001082 002 OF 002

depends on finding a definitive solution to the "Nkunda problem."
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